thousand inhabitants, two hotels, three miles of paved sidewalk, a public school, four factories, and two newspapers. All that in six months! It's a hummer, I can tell you!"

As he paused for breath she sighed. "And yet you speak of romance!"

"Romance! There's no romance in that. That's just get up and get. I had to hustle, Mrs. Cheyne. I'd promised these people the water from the mountains on a certain date; but I couldn't do it, and the big ditch wasn't finished. I was in a bad fix; for I'd broken my word. Those people had paid me their money, and they threatened to lynch me. They had a mass meeting, and were calling me some ugly names when I walked in. Why they didn't take a shot at me then I don't know; but they didn't. I got up on the table, and when they stopped yelling I began to talk to 'em. I didn't know just what to say; but I knew I had to say something and make good—or go out of town in a pine box. I began by telling 'em what a great town Wrayville was going to be. They only yelled, 'Where's our water?' I told them it was coming. They tried to hoot me down; but I kept on."

"Weren't you afraid?"

"You bet I was; but they never knew it! I tried to think of a reason why they didn't have the water, and in a moment they began to listen. I told 'em there was thirty thousand dollars' worth of digging to be done. I told 'em it would be done too; but that I didn't see why that money should go out of Wrayville to a lot of contractors in Denver. I'd been saving that work for the citizens of Wrayville. I was prepared to pay the highest wages for good men, and if Wrayville said the word they could begin the big ditch tomorrow."

"What did they do?"

"They stopped yelling right there, and I knew I had 'em going. In a minute they started to cheer. Before I finished they were carrying me around the hall on their shoulders. Phew! but that took some quick thinking!"

MRS. CHEYNE had started forward when he began, and as he went on her eyes lost their sleepy look, her manner its languor, and she followed him to the end in wonder. When he stopped, she sank back in her corner smiling, and repeated:

"Romance! What romance is there left in the world for a man like you?"

He looked up at her with his baby stare, and then laughed awkwardly. "You're making fun of me, Mrs. Cheyne. I've been talking too much, I reckon."

She didn't reply at once, and the look in her eyes embarrassed him. He reached for his cigarette case, offered it to her, and when she refused took one himself, lit it slowly, gazing out of the transom opposite.

"I hope I haven't tired you, Mrs. Cheyne. It's dangerous to get me talking about myself. I never know when to stop."

"I don't want you to stop. I've never been so entertained in my life. I don't believe you know how interesting you are."

He turned toward her, embarrassed and still incredulous. "You're very kind," he muttered.

"You mustn't be so humble," she broke in sharply. "You weren't so a minute ago. I like you best when you are telling of yourself."

"I thought I'd like to talk about you."

She waved a hand in deprecation. "Me? Oh, no! We can't come to earth like that. Tell me another fairy tale."

"Fairy tale? Then you don't believe me?"

"Oh, yes," she laughed, "I believe you; but to me they're fairy tales just the same. It seems so easy for you to do wonderful things! I wish you'd do some conjuring for me."

"Oh, there isn't any magic business about me; but I'll try. What do you want most?"

She put an elbow on her knee and gazed at the blossom in her fingers. Her voice too fell a note. "What I think I want most," she said slowly, "is a way out of this." She waved the blossom vaguely in the direction of the drawing room. "I'm sick of it all, of the same tiresome people, the same tiresome dinners, dances, teas. We're so narrow, so cynical, so deeply enmeshed in our small pursuits! I'm weary—desperately weary of myself."

"You!"

"Yes." And then, with a short unmirthful laugh, "That's my secret. You didn't suspect it, did you?"

"Lord, no!" and after a pause. "You're unhappy about him?"

"Cheyne? Oh, no. He's the only thing I am happy about. Have you ever been really bored, Mr. Wray?"

"Never. I never even heard the word until I came to New York."

"Have you ever been so tired that your body was numb, so that if you struck it a blow you were hardly conscious of it, when you felt as if you could go to sleep and never want to wake up? Well, that's the condition of my mind. It's so tired of the same impressions that it fails to make note of them; the people I see, the things I do, are all blurred and colorless, like a photograph that has been taken out of focus. The only regret I have when I go to sleep is that I have to wake up again."

"My dear Mrs. Cheyne—"

"Oh, I'm not morbid; I'm too bored to be morbid even; I don't think I'm even unhappy. It takes an effort to be unhappy. I can't tell you what the matter is. One drifts. I've been drifting a long time. I think I have too much money. I want to want something."

"Don't you ever want anything you can't have?"

She sat upright, and her voice instead of drawling languidly came in the quick accents of discovery. "Yes, I do. I've just found out. You've actually created a new interest in life. Won't you be nice to me? Come and see me often and tell me more fairy tales."

Chapter VII. Braebank

I CAN'T see, Curtis," said Mrs. Janney in the smoking room, "why you chose to ask those vulgar Wrays to Braebank. It almost seems as if you were carrying your business relationships too far. The woman is pretty enough, and I dare say her easy Western ways will be attractive to the masculine portion of your guests; but the man is impossible—absolutely impossible! He does not even use correct English, and his manners—atrocious!"

The palms of the good woman's hands as she raised them in her righteous wrath were pink on the inside like petals of rosebuds. They were sheltered hands, soft and plump, and their fingers bore many large and expensive jewels. Mrs. Janney was made up wholly of convex curves, which neither art nor starvation could deflect. The roundness of her face was further accented by concentric curves at brows, mouth, and chin, which gave the impression of a series of parentheses. It would not be stretching the figure too far to add that Mrs. Janney in most of their few affiliations bore a somewhat parenthetical relation to her husband. Her life as well as her conversation was made up of "asides," to which Curtis Janney was not in the habit of paying the slightest attention. Her present remarks, however, seemed to merit a reply.

"My dear Amelia," he said tolerantly from his easy-chair, "when we were first married you used to say that all a man needed to make his way in New York was a dress suit and a smile. Wray has both. Besides, it is quite necessary to be on good terms with him. As for his wife, I have rarely seen a girl who created such an agreeable impression. Cornelius Bent has taken them up. He has his reasons for doing so. So have I. I'll trouble you, therefore, to be civil."

He got up and put down his cigar, and Mrs. Janney shrugged her shoulders into more pronounced convexity.

"I won't question your motives, Curtis, though of course I know you have them; but I don't think we can afford to jeopardize our standing by always taking up new people like the Wrays. The man is vulgar, the woman provincial."

Janney by this time had taken up the telephone and was ordering the wagons to the station.

WHY, Gretchen dear, you're late! It's almost train-time."

Miss Janney, in riding clothes, entered from the terrace, bringing traces of the fine November weather. She was a tall, slender girl of the athletic type, sinuous and strong, with a skin so firm and ruddy from the air that it glowed crisply as though shot with mica.

"Is it, Mother? Cortland and I had such a wonderful ride! He is really quite the nicest man in the world. Aren't you, Cort?"

"Of course I am," said Bent, laughing as he entered, "anything Gretchen says. That's because I never make love to her. Isn't it, Gretchen?"

"Partly. Love is so silly! You know, Daddy, I've given Cort his congé."

Janney turned testily. "What nonsense you children talk!"

"I mean it, though, Daddy," she went on calmly. "I'm too fond of Cort ever to think of marrying him. We settled that still more definitely today. Since you were so inconsiderate, you two, as to neglect to provide me with a brother, I've adopted Cort."

"Really, Gretchen, you're getting more hopeless every day!" sighed her mother. "What does Cortland say?"

"I?" laughed Bent. "What is there left for me to say? We're hopelessly friendly, that's all. I'm afraid there's nothing left but to take to drink. May I?"

He lifted the decanter of Scotch and poured himself a drink; but Janney, with a scowl in the direction of his daughter, left the room.

"You mustn't speak so heartlessly, Dear," said Mrs. Janney. "You know it always makes your father angry. You must be patient with her, Cortland."

"I am," said that man, helping himself to a cigarette. "I'm the soul of patience, Mrs. Janney. I've pleaded and begged, I've even threatened suicide; but all to no purpose. There's no satisfaction in shooting oneself on

"You Didn't Come Nearly So Soon as I Wanted You to," Said Rita.